

Updated March 2021



The Asian/Asian American Sexual Experience

RAISINS (Radical Asians)
May 2019



Today's Context

On March 17, 2021, 8 people were murdered. 6 were Asian women.

While the murderer and police say that the crime was not racially motivated, **this was a hate crime.**

He has blamed his sex addiction saying he wanted to **"eliminate his temptation"** (NYT). Addressing violent abuse towards women requires an intersectional lens that incorporates feminism, anti-racism, and a dismantling of white supremacy.

Blaming his temptation on Asian women demonstrates how the white patriarchal gaze has enabled decades of **fetishization, violent abuse, racism, and misogyny towards Asian women under systems of imperialism, conquest, and patriarchy.**

**Say the names of
the victims.**

Daoyou Feng

Hyun Jung Grant

Park Hyeon Jeong

Suncha Kim

Paul Andre Michels

Soon Chung Park

Xiaojie Tan

Delaina Ashley Yaun

Historical Context

In 1875, just a few years before the Chinese Exclusion Act, [the Page Act](#) was passed. It served to prevent Chinese women from immigrating to the United States under the assumption that they were prostitutes.

The Korean and Vietnam Wars were also important events that resulted in the escalation of the sexualization of Asian women. During these wars, “sex with Asian women fulfilled GI fantasies about American superiority and the benefits of imperialism.” Sex became an ideological weapon.
(Brown, 1993)

Systems of Oppression

We must recognize that this **was not** a random act of violence - a “bad day” for someone.

Institutions and systems of power have worked to undermine, objectify, and wrongly justify violence towards Asian women. We reject the justifications of a **“sex addition”** and **“issue with porn”** for the violence carried out by a white supremacist.

Sexualization of Asian women in the service industry

Because many Asian women work in the service industry, it often feeds into the narrative that Asian immigrants are here to serve white Americans, particularly men.

The historic perception of Asian women as sex workers has also contributed to this perception.

This context and history of economic marginalization of immigrant women has also labeled Asian women as “**cheap and disposable workers**,” says Rachel Kuo, the leader of Asian American Feminist Collective.

The (Sexualized) Portrayal of Asian/Asian-Americans in the Media

Racism is sexualized, sexism is racialized.

(@bekah_sun on Instagram)

It manifests through the discrimination between potential sexual/romantic partners on the basis of perceived racial identity – while not to be conflated with ideas of sexual freedom, this must be situated within the context of colonialism, prejudice, and Whiteness.

Thus, we begin to understand how these systems have marginalized and fetishized Asian people, creating long lasting stereotypes, that linger to this day.
(Callandar 2015)



The World of Suzie Wong (1960) Suzie is a sex worker living in Hong Kong who quickly becomes the love interest of a white American man who “saves” her from a “dirty life of prostitution” (Wang, 2012)



In **Full Metal Jacket (1987)** a Vietnamese sex worker approaches two American GI's and proclaims “me love you long time.” Since then, this line has become associated with Asian women and their role to serve white men's sexual desires (Louie, 2013)



Phuong, a “live-in mistress”, frequently mistaken for a prostitute in *The Quiet American* (2002)



Mantis, doll-like, voiceless, portrayed as foreign, *Guardians of the Galaxy 2* (2017)



Isabella, “yoga ambassador” and love interest in *Isn't It Romantic* (2019)

How Asian Men are Sexualized in Media

Long Duk Dong, appears accompanied by a gong sound, “uncool”, practices conversational English in *Sixteen Candles* (1984)



Mr. Chow, effeminate and the butt of jokes in *The Hangover* (2009)

What this looks like for...

Women:

- **Fetishization**/hypersexualization/submissiveness
- **Overrepresentation** in porn
- **Yellow fever**
- Dragon lady/china doll
- Japanese schoolgirl - hentai
- **Exoticization**

Queer/trans folk:

- Bisexual/lesbian women - often get labeled as “**freaky**” or even “**spicy**”
- Bisexual/gay men - “effeminate, submissive, and docile”; **hypersexual**
- Transgender women – **objectified** by Westerners

Men:

- **Asexualized/emasculated**, “nerdy” and “unattractive”
- Long Duk Dong in *Sixteen Candles* – **emasculated figure**, but also “sex-crazy”
- Mr. Chow in *The Hangover* – **effeminate** and the butt of many jokes

Why are these topics difficult to talk about?

- Asian culture treats explicit **sexual education/sexual pleasure as taboo**
- Intergenerationally, families may find these issues difficult to discuss as they **lack the vocabulary and actual languaging** to describe topics of consent, pleasure, and contraception
- Asian cultures also largely value community values, order, and **“saving face.”** **This restrictive group mentality might dissuade those affected by trauma from speaking out**
- The idea that “all Asians are the same” (commonly referring to East Asians) **negates the living conditions, suffering, and experiences of all Asian ethnic identities**

What does sex ed look like for Asians/Asian Americans today?

- Initially learning about sex through **peers and school sex ed**, rather than through conversations with parents
- If there are conversations with parents, it is at an older age and parents assume knowledge of sex. Oftentimes, these conversations are focused on safe sex and avoidance of STIs and **do not move past this medical focus**

Re-envisioning the Asian-American Sexual Experience

Changes we hope for:

- **Acceptance** of sexual activity in general
- Emphasis on **enthusiastic consent**
- **Not just abstinence-only** education
- Choice to engage in sexual activity **does not reflect bad morality**
- Acknowledge and work on our **differences!**
(influenced by culture, norms, religion, generational gap, etc.)
- **No feelings of guilt** when it comes to pleasure
- Body positivity
- **No victim blaming**
- Not reinforcing gender stereotypes
- For sex to not be necessarily linked to marriage
- Increased visibility of **queer experiences**
- Recognizing the suffering of South-Asian women subject to trafficking

What could this re-imagined sexual acceptance result in?

- No repressed sex drive/sexuality
- No trauma/abuse (sex-related)
- Safer, more consensual sex in general
- So. much. PLEASURE!
- No guilt for just doing what human beings do
- Open conversations in the Asian-American community